ELDER HEALTH LAW ADVOCACY CLINIC

What is Elder Health Law Advocacy? By 2050, older people are expected to comprise approximately 20% of the world’s population. The health and well-being of senior citizens has thus become a central focus of policymakers, and the cost and quality of healthcare for the elderly has increasingly been the subject of legislation and regulation. Medical decision making, paying for the cost of care, palliative care, medical futility, cognitive impairment, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease are just a few of the medical issues that the legal system must address.

What Skills Training is Offered? Student attorneys will develop core legal skills through representation of elderly clients with health law related issues. Students conduct client and witness interviews, engage in factual development of cases and legal research and writing, problem solving, written communications, and drafting of legal documents. Students should expect some litigation and courtroom experience, as well as opportunities for advocacy before administrative agencies. Students will also have the opportunity to work with health care providers, non-profit, and governmental agencies in the aging network engaged in advocating for seniors in the health care context. Finally, students will develop and present a community legal education program to a group of seniors on a health law topic.

What Types of Cases May Be Involved? Advance healthcare directives, health care and long term care issues, Medicare, Medicaid, long-term care insurance, diminished capacity and conservatorship, Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability, quality of care issues, resident’s rights in long term care facilities, discharge planning, end of life and hospice care, and medical futility.

How Many Credit Hour and Grades? Clinic students will earn four (4) hours of academic credit for the semester and the course will be letter graded. Two-thirds of the letter grade will be based on the student’s mastery of fundamental lawyering skills in client representation and one-third of the grade will be based on the student’s performance in creation and delivery of the community legal education presentation.

What Prerequisites? Clinic prerequisites are Professional Responsibility and Evidence. Recommended courses are Health Law, Administrative Law, and Elder Law.

Time Requirements? Elder Law Clinic student attorneys will attend group orientation sessions for the first three weeks of the semester. Thereafter, student attorneys will attend weekly class case review sessions and be available an additional seven hours per week at the Clinic Office at set times to be arranged with the Clinical Professor. Students are expected to spend fifteen (15) hours per week total on Clinic activities, with the additional hours outside of those already scheduled for weekly class sessions and regular office hours being spent conducting investigation, research, trial preparation, etc. Because a significant number of elderly clients are homebound or residing in long term care facilities, students may be expected to conduct up to two home visits interviews during the semester, accompanied by the Clinic Director.